1. GENERAL - RECOVERY

What is EPA's role in long term recovery?

Short Answer:

The EPA plays a key role in many areas by protecting the basic natural resources that influence every aspect of life, as well as improving environmental and public health outcomes by focusing on sustainability and resiliency for the citizenry of Puerto Rico and the USVI. We will use our network of partners that have national, regional, and community-based expertise, to work with Puerto Rico and USVI local governments and communities to stand them back up in a way that is sustainable.

To this end, we are developing a detailed recovery strategy that will identify specific actions EPA is undertaking and partnerships upon which we are relying to help Puerto Rico and the USVI recover.

Additional Background:

FEMA has established six recovery functions, and EPA has a role in all of them:

- Community Planning and Capacity Building (lead: FEMA)
- Economic (lead: Department of Commerce)
- Health and Social Services (lead: HHS)
- Housing Recovery (lead: HUD)
- Infrastructure Systems (lead: Army Corps of Engineers)
- Natural and Cultural Resources (lead: DOI)

EPA has developed its own overarching recovery objectives:

Provide assistance to the Governments of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands -- Provide assistance so that infrastructure recovery projects and efforts consider and
address key environmental needs, requirements and standards.

Build preparedness to mitigate future events – Lessen the impacts of disasters by assisting federal, state and local agencies and communities prior to disasters.

Promote sustainable and resilient rebuilding - Use EPA's expertise to inform communities, states and federal partners about rebuilding for the long-term viability of regions' people, economies, and natural ecosystems.

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Apply EPA's Knowledge – Provide EPA's expertise to other Federal agencies, states, and communities in areas of EPA responsibility, such as drinking and waste water
infrastructure, brownfields, air quality, or oil and hazardous materials clean-ups.

Streamline Federal Action - Work with our partner agencies to streamline Federal oversight to efficiently fulfill statutory, permitting and/or enforcement requirements in a
timely fashion.

Partner with Environmental Justice (EJ)/Disadvantaged Communities – Actively engage vulnerable and overburdened communities so they can meaningfully participate and have their issues addressed during recovery operations and planning.

2. GENERAL – RECOVERY

How many people will EPA have involved in recovery activities?

Short Answer:

Because recovery works differently than response activities, EPA will have a relatively few people dedicated full-time to the efforts, but many EPA staff will be involved at various times in various aspects of recovery.

EPA is developing a strategy to ensure tight coordination among EPA offices and programs. In addition, we are working out the details of having people stationed in FEMA/state joint field offices in Puerto Rico and the USVI to coordinate and focus full-time on recovery work.

3. GENERAL – RECOVERY

What is EPA's role in the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)?

Short Answer:

EPA has a key role to play. We act as a Primary Agency for the Health and Social Services and Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Support Functions (RSFs) and as a Support Agency for the rest of the RSFs.

Additional Background:

FEMA, along with other Federal agencies, implements the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) to guide and promote effective recovery, particularly for those presidentially-declared incidents that are largescale or catastrophic; specifically, through the activation of Recovery Support Functions (RSFs).

The RSFs are organized into six manageable components, each with a lead coordinating agency. These are:

1. *Community Planning and Capacity Building* (CPCB) RSF [Lead: FEMA]
2. *Natural and Cultural Resources* RSF [Lead: US Department of Interior]
3. *Economics* RSF [Lead: US Department of Commerce]
4. *Health and Social Services* RSF [Lead: US Department of Health and Human Services]
5. *Housing* RSF [Lead: US Department of Housing and Urban Development]
6. *Infrastructure Systems* RSF [Lead: US Army Corps of Engineers]

4. GENERAL -- RECOVERY

What role does EPA play in ensuring that the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico have more resilient infrastructure in place, post Hurricane Maria?

Short Answer:

The EPA is developing a *Hurricanes Irma and Maria Recovery Framework for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands* that will guide the EPA and provides a framework for rebuilding more sustainable and resilient communities.

Moving forward, EPA will work jointly with FEMA, other federal agencies, and Territorial Governments to assess disaster recovery needs. Results of these assessments will provide a springboard upon which we will build a joint 180-Day Plan for Puerto Rico and a joint Recovery Support Strategy for the USVI. Disaster recovery assessments will take place during the first 90 days of the recovery process and will include assessments of the damages and infrastructure needs of: PRASA waste water systems and drinking water facilities, and Non-PRASA drinking water facilities in Puerto Rico, impaired stormwater infrastructure in Puerto Rico, open dumps and landfills including operations and capacities assessments. In addition, EPA will also work with the Government of Puerto Rico to determine the viability of solar energy projects and help to identify candidates for potential micro grid pilot projects.

5. GENERAL -- RECOVERY:

How does EPA coordinate with the Puerto Rico government and with entities such as PRASA?

Short Answer:

One of the most critical aspects of EPA's recovery work in Puerto Rico is to ensure that we respect home rule and that we are responding to the needs of the Puerto Rico government. At the direct request of PRDOH, EPA is providing support for drinking water sampling, for example. The coordination overall happens on many levels. Our Caribbean Environmental Protection Division Director and her staff use their close working relationships with Puerto Rico government officials to ensure that EPA's work is tracking with their needs. We have shared with key government officials our draft strategy for recovery to ensure that it makes sense from the perspective of the Puerto Rico government. In addition, there are regular meetings and calls between EPA and Puerto Rico government staff on a wide variety of topics. In addition, as Regional Administrator, I correspond regularly with key Puerto Rico officials, including the President of the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board and Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, Tania Vazquez.

6. GENERAL – RECOVERY

How long do you expect your recovery work to continue?

Short Answer:

We are still engaged in response work, which we expect to continue in lessening degrees over the next few months, likely wrapping up in early summer. We are transitioning now to recovery, which will take many years, as it has with other disaster recoveries, and will require continued, thoughtful engagement as we work to address critical needs on the islands. EPA is in this for the long haul; we have staff and offices there and will not be leaving.

7. GENERAL -- RESPONSE:

What is the role of EPA's HQ offices in coordinating with the regions and other agencies during emergency responses?

Short Answer:

The EPA is working in a Unified Command Structure undertaking mission assignments given by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) based on requests made by states, commonwealths or territories. The EPA conducts its response under Incident Commanders and Deputy Incident Commanders, who are generally experienced responders from the local regional office. During large responses EPA augments the impacted region with personnel from all the federal regions and our Headquarters offices. These Incident Commanders and their Deputies coordinate with our national Emergency Operations Center, which is usually also activated during a major national response such as Maria.

Additional Background:

HQ's Role During and After the Hurricanes – The Office of Emergency Management within OLEM serves as the National Incident Coordinator (NIC) and chairs the inter-agency National Response Team (NRT) and the EPA National Incident Coordination Team (NICT) comprised of the leadership from all the EPA Headquarters programs and offices.

The Agency's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) assists Regions in managing major emergency responses. The HQ EOC coordinates with the EPA Regional EOCs to disseminate information to senior leaders at HQ and Regional offices through EOC Spot Reports.

For recent hurricane responses and the Agency's response to the fires in California, the Administrator has convened an Executive-level Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) to address significant intra-agency and inter-agency national policy issues. The PCC, comprised of HQ and Regional senior leaders, assesses, analyzes and formulates a coordinated Agency position on questions, situations and incidents related to the hurricanes and fires.

8. GENERAL -- RESPONSE:

How many personnel has EPA deployed in total and how many do you have deployed now to respond to Hurricanes Irma and Maria?

Short Answer:

As of March 14, EPA has about 220 personnel, including EPA employees and contractors, in Puerto Rico.

Since the first hurricane hit, the EPA has deployed a total of about 730 people to respond to Hurricanes Irma and Maria. This number includes employees from all 10 EPA regions and our headquarters office. People have been deployed for overlapping shifts, which more than 240 personnel working in Puerto Rico at the height of the response work.

Additional Background:

The EPA has 56 employees that work out of our San Juan, Puerto Rico offices and out of an office on St. Thomas. About 30 of these employees have been involved in the response.

9. GENERAL -- RESPONSE

What have been the major lessons learned throughout this emergency response?

Short Answer:

The logistical challenges presented by the island setting and pre-existing weaknesses in the state of the infrastructure in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, along with economic struggles of both governments, have been greatly exacerbated by these two devastating hurricanes.

Some major observations:

- The need to have resilient infrastructure with sustainable solutions is more important than ever.
- Preparedness for disasters needs to be included in all the planning and decision-making regarding infrastructure systems.
- We need to streamline federal action and integrate federal recovery resources and capabilities with local government resources, private sector and NGO partners to expedite recovery support.

10. GENERAL -- RESPONSE:

What has been the biggest challenge in responding to Maria and Irma?

Short Answer:

The single biggest challenge for Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands communities, as well as the responding agencies, has been the challenge of restoring electricity throughout the islands. Lack of electricity dramatically slowed down the pace and greatly complicated our collective response.

Additional Background:

Additional challenges have included limitations in communications, additional rain, flooding and landslides making driving dangerous and in some places impossible; the lack of availability of flights and especially lodging for responders; the breakdown of generators under continuous use; and difficulties of delivering fuel, food and drinking water to places where they are needed.

11. INTERGOVERNMENTAL -- RECOVERY:

What challenges (bureaucratic or otherwise) may be associated with pivoting from emergency response work to recovery efforts?

Short Answer:

One challenge is that the efforts are more diffuse and less centralized than under response, which is work done through mission assignments and with specific funding through FEMA. And, since recovery is the permanent fix, it requires more planning, coordination, and collaboration, which is time consuming. I feel sure we will meet this challenge using organizational best practices and experience.

I am EPA's chief representative on the FEMA Undersecretaries Recovery Support Function Leadership Group (RSFLG), which is. This group of high-level officials from federal agencies meets every two weeks and it provides an excellent opportunity to identify partnerships and funding streams across federal agencies.

To streamline and better organize EPA's recovery efforts, EPA has established an interdisciplinary team internally in the Region and we are developing a detailed *Recovery Framework for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands*. The team has been meeting regularly and is working with FEMA and the other NDRF federal agencies on a recovery strategy. The primary challenge is to ensure that the governments of Puerto Rico and the USVI have adequate assistance so that recovery projects address key human health and environmental needs, requirements and standards.

12. INTERGOVERNMENTAL -- RECOVERY

Do you anticipate long term intergovernmental coordination issues as you work to get recovery efforts to get off the ground?

Short Answer:

We are already working closely with FEMA within the National Disaster Recovery Framework and are coordinating closely with our other federal partners. Large-scale disasters such as these naturally result in lengthy recoveries, but we have a great track record of working collaboratively and have no reason to expect that there will be any major impediments to our ongoing intergovernmental coordination.

13. DRINKING WATER -- RECOVERY

What is the current percentage of people in Puerto Rico have access to drinking water?

Short Answer:

PRASA – PRASA reports that **1.3%** of clients are without drinking water service.

Three of the 114 drinking water treatment plants (WTPs) operated by PRASA are out of service.

32 water treatment plants are working on alternate power and 79 on primary power.

Plants still out of service:

1. Quebradillas (5.0 MGD) – Raw water pumps are clogged.
2. Las Delicias (0.5 MGD) – Alternate Power Unit out of service.
3. Almirante Sur (1.0 MGD) - Alternate Power Unit out of service.

Non-PRASA -- There are 237 small rural systems NOT run by PRASA, which serve about 3% of the population in Puerto Rico.

EPA has assessed all of these systems, and coordinated with Puerto Rico government, FEMA and other entities, including NGOs to facilitate repairs and generators for the systems. About 14 Non-PRASA systems remain without primary power**.** EPA recently installed generators at five of these systems.

14. DRINKING WATER – RECOVERY

What is EPA's role in restoring drinking water to rural communities and to making sure they will continue to have access to drinking water into the future?

Short Answer:

In October 2017, EPA evaluated all the **237 public drinking water systems** not run by the Puerto Rico utility – Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA). These Non-PRASA systems are primarily in rural locations and many were hard hit. As of March 14, the majority of the systems are back up and running with either primary power or power generators, but **14 systems** remain without hard line power and require power generators and/or repairs to become operational.

EPA has been able to install generators in **five of these systems** and is working with municipalities, the Puerto Rico Emergency Management Agency, the Government Authorized Representative, and FEMA to get authorization to install generators and do necessary repairs at each of the remaining systems. Because of their remote locations, it is possible that some of these communities will not be connected to the PREPA grid until the summer of 2018.

Additional Background:

Non-PRASA systems serve between 3% to 4% of Puerto Rico's population (~90,000 people), primarily in small isolated communities in rural areas. Most of the systems lack adequate treatment, particularly filtration and are run by volunteers within the community, not certified operators.

Currently, 96 surface Non-PRASA systems have EPA Administrative Orders for Non-compliance with the Surface Water Treatment Rule. These systems need technical, educational and financial assistance. EPA is working with sister agencies to identify potential sources of funding to help ensure systems that come back up can provide water that meets federal standards in the long-term.

15. DRINKING WATER – RECOVERY

What is EPA's role in the overall federal, state, and local coordination effort in Puerto Rico to restore access to drinking water?

Short Answer:

In Puerto Rico, EPA first helped to assess drinking water and wastewater systems, including Non-PRASA drinking water systems. We continue to work in close coordination with the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) to test drinking water from both PRASA and Non-PRASA systems. As part of our recovery work, we are aiding Non-PRASA drinking water systems to sustainably get them back on their feet.

Additional Background:

As of March 14, 2018, about 1.3 % of the population is still not receiving drinking water through the utility system. The Agency had previously assessed all 237 Non-PRASA drinking water systems located in rural areas of Puerto Rico, and worked with FEMA, the government of Puerto Rico and local authorities to ensure that initial repairs were made and assistance provided to help get temporary power to these systems.

EPA has begun the next phase to address approximately **35 (This number is sometimes reported as 44 – PLEASE CONFIRM NUMBER) of these systems** that require infrastructure and other fixes to improve their operations and ensure that they have reliable power sources. EPA is also taking samples at Non-PRASA drinking water systems in Puerto Rico in support of the Puerto Rico Department of Health's surveillance efforts.

16. DRINKING WATER – RECOVERY

How has EPA worked with the private sector to restore access to drinking water?

Short Answer:

From early in our response, EPA coordinated with FEMA and other governmental entities, as well as with Non-governmental organizations to assist the estimated 76,000 Puerto Rico residents in over 200 communities across the island that rely on drinking water sources from pumps and wells and surface water that are not supplied by the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA).

As we transition into recovery, we are looking to partner with governmental and Non-governmental organizations, as well as other entities as appropriate, to find permanent and sustainable fixes for the Non-PRASA systems that are either still not operating or those systems that are using temporary sources of power. Our goal is to get systems – both PRASA and Non-PRASA back on their feet in a way that can be sustained into the future.

17. DRINKING WATER – RECOVERY

Are there additional resources needed to continue sampling of drinking water in Puerto Rico?

Short Answer:

EPA has assisted the Puerto Rico government by conducting some sampling of PRASA and Non-PRASA systems and we have fully restored one of EQBs laboratories, which will aid them in processing environmental samples.

EPA will continue to collaborate with the Puerto Rico government as we transition into recovery, including by providing what resources we can via the drinking water State Revolving Fund program and by partnering with other entities such as USDA to find ways to assist Non-PRASA systems in getting back up and running in a way that can be sustained into the future.

We are also continuing to collaborate and make connections between NGOs and other federal and local government agencies in order to help assist communities of Non-PRASA systems obtain backup sources of power and longer range improvements.

18. DRINKING WATER- DORADO - RESPONSE :

Were people drinking water from the EPA's Dorado groundwater contamination Superfund site?

Short Answer:

No. The EPA immediately investigated when we got reports that people might be drinking from contaminated wells at the Dorado site. We have taken two rounds of samples from spigots where people were getting water, and have confirmed that the water from these spigots is NOT from three contaminated wells, but rather from a treated drinking water distribution system.

Additional Background:

The initial reports were incorrect, resulting from the understandable confusion caused by people obtaining drinking water from spigots at the same locations as some of the contaminated wells. These spigots are distinct from the wells themselves, and do not draw water from those wells. The pumps in the contaminated wells are disabled and water cannot be drawn from these wells.

Background on Dorado Superfund Site
The EPA added an area of Dorado to the Superfund list in September 2016 because there is some contamination in the groundwater aquifer underlying this area. As part of the Superfund process, EPA is examining the precise extent and location of the contaminated groundwater plume. Data gathered by EPA in 2015 showed that some wells in the western part of the area are contaminated, while some wells in the eastern portion of the area meet drinking water standards, including the Santa Rosa and Nevarez wells. Three of the wells that showed contamination are wells numbered 2, 4 and 6.

EPA Dorado Sampling:
Results from sampling found no exceedances of drinking water standards.

19. DRINKING WATER – DORADO -- RESPONSE

Why would EPA allow people to drink from wells on a Superfund site?

Short Answer:

These wells were included in the Superfund site designation as a precaution because the EPA is still studying the nature and extent of the groundwater contamination. Two wells on the eastern side of the area – known as the Santa Rosa and Nevarez wells – have not historically shown contamination in excess of drinking water standards and are sometimes used by PRASA to provide drinking water to people in the community.

20. DRINKING WATER – DORADO - RESPONSE

What standards did EPA use to evaluate the samples taken at the Dorado site and how were those number derived?

Short Answer:

The EPA is comparing levels of contaminants in the water from these spigots, including the two contaminants of particular concern for this site – Trichloroethylene (TCE) and Tetrachloroethylene (PCE) -- to levels set under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Drinking water standards are enforced across the country. They are set using a very rigorous scientific process that includes peer review. Drinking water standards control the level of contaminants in the nation's drinking water.

21. WASTEWATER - RECOVERY:

How is EPA dealing with sewage issues in PR?

Short Answer:

The EPA is helping to determine where there are problems so they can be addressed, and also alerting people to the dangers of coming into contact with untreated sewage.

EPA, the PR Department of Health and the federal CDC have joined forces to strongly advise residents not to use surface waters for bathing. This advice has been transmitted over the radio, through social media, and in direct contacts with residents by EPA personnel. This effort is supplemented by aggressive efforts by PRASA to get the wastewater plans back online and operational.

Additional Background:

As of March 14, 2018, all of the 51 wastewater treatment plants operated by PRASA are operational; and about 684 of the 714 pump stations are operating.

The EPA is working with the Puerto Rico government to do assessments of the systems and determine repairs or re-powering needs. The lead agencies for making repairs are a combination of the Puerto Rico government and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. That work is ongoing and, of course, there is a priority given to treatment plants and pump stations that are upstream of drinking water intakes.

22. WASTEWATER - RECOVERY:

What is EPA doing to address longer term wastewater-related concerns, such as sewage overflows during rain events?

Short Answer:

As part of its recovery work, we will assess PRASA's wastewater facilities' damage inventory and infrastructure needs. Where needs are identified, we will work with the Puerto Rico government to help fill gaps, using either EPA funding streams, such as the State Revolving Loan Fund or working with sister agencies.

23. WASTEWATER – RECOVERY:

Is there any federal requirement that wastewater treatment facilities provide emergency back-up power to ensure continuity of operations in the event of a natural disaster?

Short Answer:

There is no such specific requirement; however, Federal regulations require that all wastewater treatment plants are properly operated and maintained. If they do not have an alternate power source, whenever there is a power failure, the potential of a sewage overflow reaching surface waters or waters of the U.S. exists. Such an avoidable overflow would constitute a violation of the Clean Water Act.

Additional Background:

Alternate power units are made up of mechanical equipment that can break down and which require periodic maintenance, etc. Such units may not have been designed for extended use (i.e., constant operation for many weeks at a time). In addition, for some time after the hurricane there was a shortage of diesel fuel, since priority was given to hospitals. Finally, some of the wastewater treatment facilities are out of service because their main trunk sewer line(s) collapsed, not because of a lack of primary or alternate power.

24. AIR – RECOVERY

What is EPA doing to get the Puerto Rico air monitoring network back up and running?

Short Answer:

In coordination with EQB, EPA is working to repair and restore the **20 (NOTE: this number is sometimes reported as 19 – please advise)** fixed Ambient Air Monitoring stations in Puerto Rico. All assessments of every site were completed in January and the necessary equipment and parts have been ordered. Because some of the equipment isn't just "off-the-shelf," we estimate that we will have the components by mid-May and that the necessary installation work will take about a month, followed by a calibration period of about 2 weeks.

25. SOLID WASTE – RECOVERY

What is EPA doing to address the solid waste crisis and open dumps in Puerto Rico?

Short Answer:

There is no denying that pre-existing issues with Puerto Rico's solid waste management program were made worse by the hurricanes, which produced a great deal of debris. As part of its recovery work, EPA will engage EPA contractors to assess capacity at all of the islands' currently operating landfills and will provide financial and technical support to Puerto Rico to fund items such as developing a comprehensive solid waste management plan, which would likely include waste reduction, recycling and composting strategies, as well as plans for improvements at solid waste landfills. We are also exploring other funding streams from other agencies that might help Puerto Rico or municipal governments better manage solid waste.

26. **POWER -- RECOVERY:**

What will EPA be doing to make the Puerto Rico power grid more resilient and promote alternative energy?

Short Answer:

While power resiliency is not an EPA lead, we have been working with FEMA and non-governmental organizations to bring generators and solar power to small, rural drinking water systems not run by the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA).

As part of our **recovery work going forward**, we will be working with Department of Energy and other partners on developing micro grids for some communities, beginning with Culebra. In addition, we are assessing the viability for solar power at Superfund sites, landfills and brownfield sites.

27. **POWER -- RESPONSE:**

Why has it taken so long to get power back to Puerto Rico?

Short Answer:

The EPA does not have a direct role in restoring power after disasters. EPA did play a role, however, working with FEMA and non-governmental organizations to bring generators and solar power to small, rural drinking water systems not run by the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA).

As part of our **recovery work going forward**, we will be working with Department of Energy and other partners on developing micro grids for some communities, beginning with Culebra.

28. POWER -- RESPONSE:

Does EPA support the Energy Answers waste-to-energy project as a solution to the solid waste crisis in Puerto Rico?

Short Answer:

The EPA respects home rule and decisions about how energy is generated are decisions for the Puerto Rico government to make. As a general matter, EPA does not endorse or support specific projects.

In this case, EPA is the permitting authority for one of the air permits needed for the Energy Answers facility (Puerto Rico is the authority for a number of permits for this facility). EPA issued a preconstruction air permit, called a Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permit, for the Energy Answers waste to energy facility to be built in Arecibo, Puerto Rico.

In issuing the permit and later extending it, the EPA applied the PSD regulations and guidance in its evaluation of Energy Answers' permit application and determined that the project, as permitted, met the requirements of the PSD regulations. The permit establishes requirements on the facility that represent the best available pollution control technology and ensure protection of air quality.

Additional Background:

The decisions of what are the best waste management or energy production options for a community are best made by local and Commonwealth government.

However, EPA plans to focus recovery efforts to address the solid waste problems in Puerto Rico, which were made worse by the hurricanes. EPA is working collaboratively with Puerto Rico, and plans to first help the commonwealth develop an overall solid waste management strategy, which would likely include waste reduction, recycling and composting.

29. POWER -- RESPONSE:

Did EPA determine that Energy Answers commenced construction by September 10, 2017?

Short Answer:

The EPA doesn't issue determinations on whether construction has commenced under the PSD program, nor has Energy Answers requested that we make such a determination. In a September 10 letter to the EPA, EA states it met the definition of "commence" because it "entered into[a]binding contractual obligation, with SNC-Lavalin Puerto Rico, INC, in the form of a Turnkey Construction Agreement, to undertake the construction of the Arecibo Resource Recovery Facility within a construction schedule of approximately 42-months." EA further asserts that "cancellation of this contract, even at this early stage, would result in the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars in construction and engineering work and tens of millions of dollars of development work."

30. SUPERFUND SITES - RECOVERY:

What is EPA's long-term recovery plan to monitor the effects of Hurricane Maria on existing Superfund sites on Puerto Rico?

Short Answer:

After completing assessment of all Superfund and oil sites in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, the EPA did not identify any sites were long-term monitoring related to the hurricanes would be necessary.

Additional Background:

Depending on the specifics of the site, regular monitoring is often conducted at Superfund sites. For example, groundwater is monitored on a regular basis at sites where groundwater contamination is the main concern. In some cases, EPA is engaged in an active investigation of contamination at a given site, which includes sampling. Where cleanups are complete, EPA conducts regular five-year reviews that comprehensively evaluate the protectiveness of the cleanup remedy.

When hurricanes are predicted to hit, EPA routinely does pre-storm assessments at sites to ensure that measures are taken to minimize the potential for damage. After storm-fall, EPA sends emergency response personnel out into the field to evaluate conditions at all Superfund sites.

31. SUPERFUND SITES/FACILITIES – RECOVERY

Have any issues that have caused EPA concern on a long-term basis at Superfund sites or industrial facilities?

Short Answer:

We completed assessments of all Superfund and oil sites and more than 300 regulated facilities. Some sites and facilities did experience minor damage, and there were a few minor or spills, but we did not identify any major releases or spills nor do we see any cause for long-term concern.

32. SUPERFUND SITES - RESPONSE:

Has the EPA assessed all of its Superfund sites in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and what did you find?

Short Answer:

The EPA has completed assessments of all Superfund NPL (National Priorities List) sites in Puerto Rico and the U.S. VI, along with a number of Superfund Removal sites and several oil sites. In total, EPA assessed 32 Superfund and oil sites in Puerto Rico and four in the USVI. Some sites did have damage, but there have not been any major releases or spills from or threats posed to surrounding communities by these sites.

Additional Background:

In the case of the Dorado Groundwater contamination site, the EPA received the final results from samples that we took at spigots where people were getting drinking water and found no contaminants above levels of concern. It is important to emphasize that the water from those spigots does NOT come from the contaminated wells; rather, that water comes from the PRASA distribution system.

In the case of the Scorpio Recycling site in Toa Baja, EPA conducted a follow-up inspection on November 7, 2017 and found all drums and containers to be stable. The oil-containing drums are inside a dike. However, a minor amount of oil was found beyond the dike. The situation did not present an immediate threat of release. The EPA response team coordinated the removal of the drums sand addressed the small amount of oil on **DATE**.

33. SUPERFUND SITES -- RESPONSE

Were any pre-storm activities undertaken at the Superfund sites on PR?

Short Answer:

Yes. In advance of Hurricane Irma, EPA Region 2 contacted all the responsible entities to discuss preparations for the storm, and we assessed the sites after Irma. That work was nearly complete just before Maria hit the area. We did another round of assessments after Maria.

34. FACILITIES – RESPONSE

Has EPA assessed industrial facilities in Puerto Rico and the USVI?

Short Answer:

Yes. As of March 14, 2018, the EPA has completed assessments of about 300 chemical and hazardous waste facilities that are regulated under hazardous waste, risk management or spill prevention requirements. Of these, 177 are located in Puerto Rico and 123 in the USVI. We have identified no major spills or releases from any of these facilities.

35. FACILITIES -- RESPONSE

Did EPA assess the AES Puerto Rico L.P coal-fired power plant in Guayama, PR?

Short Answer:

On October 12, a team of EPA officials assessed the AES power plant to evaluate potential spills or oil discharges and the wastewater treatment system. The assessment revealed that the facility is structurally sound and no oil spills were observed from the diesel spillage areas.

Additional Background:

The stormwater management system implemented at the facility prevented the coal ash material and coal from discharging into nearby wetlands. EPA will follow-up with AES concerning wastewater and stormwater management at the facility due to ongoing storms and flood watches throughout Puerto Rico.

36. DEBRIS MANAGEMENT – RESPONSE

What is EPA's role in ensuring household hazardous waste is properly collected and properly disposed of in Puerto Rico?

Short Answer:

EPA has worked with the governments of Puerto Rico also done curbside pickups in several communities and established **about 40 household hazardous waste collection centers in Puerto Rico, resulting in the collection of about 235,000 items in Puerto Rico.**

Additional Background:

These household hazardous waste centers designed to handle household wastes produced by impacts of the hurricanes are scheduled to close in the next few months, EPA is continuing to focus on the broader issue of strengthening solid waste infrastructure and is working with the Puerto Rico government and municipalities to address the need to close open dumps.

Key to improving the solid waste crises in both PR and USVI is to help those governments develop solid waste management plans and local disaster debris management plans. We will also look for ways to support ongoing recycling efforts as well as encourage the reduction of waste by helping to implement composting pilot projects within local communities.

37. DEBRIS MANAGEMENT - RESPONSE:

What is EPA doing to help manage non-hazardous debris in Puerto Rico?

Short Answer:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has the lead for helping Puerto Rico manage its non-hazardous storm debris, including vegetative debris. EPA has been in a support role and we work closely with the USACE to segregate hazardous waste from the non-hazardous debris. EPA has coordinated with the USACE to extract Freon from abandon refrigerators. EPA has been at the ready to provide air monitoring support for the USACE but t date there has been no need for those services in Puerto Rico.

38. SPILLS AND VESSELS -- RESPONSE:

Have there been any major spills or releases from facilities in USVI or PR?

Short Answer:

As of March 14, 2018, no major spills or releases have been reported, but the EPA has responded to about 25 minor spills, in close coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard.

39. SPILLS AND VESSELS -- RESPONSE:

What is EPA doing to manage sunken vessels?

Short Answer:

The EPA has been working with the U.S. Coast Guard, which has the lead for removing and disposing of the vessels. When the USCG removes a vessel, EPA will take responsibility for managing the oil, fuel and other hazardous materials in the vessel. So far, hazardous substances have been removed from 327 of the total 377 vessels in Puerto Rico.

40. FUNDING -- RECOVERY

How does the President's proposed 2019 budget impact your ability to respond to incidents like Maria in the future?

Short Answer:

The budget is in process with Congress, and we look forward to working with you on determining appropriate funding levels. EPA response work is being funded through the Stafford Act, a process that is managed by FEMA. Recovery dollars will be a combination of supplemental and existing EPA funds, as well as funds administered by other agencies.

41. FUNDING -- RECOVERY

What kinds of funding could be available to the PR government for recovery? Given their financial state before the hurricanes hit, how will EPA help them obtain funding?

Short Answer:

The funding mechanisms under response are very different from the funding under recovery. Funding for EPA's work on response is given through the Stafford Act, administered by FEMA and determined through specific mission assignments that are developed in response to needs expressed by states or territories.

Recovery funding is not given through the Stafford Act. Rather, EPA will likely receive some supplemental funding, and we will also focus funding streams that we already have – for example grants for states/territories or the State Revolving Fund for drinking water and wastewater.

Because of the diffuse nature of the funding for recovery work, it is crucial that EPA partner with other federal agencies and look for other funding streams to maximize the funding that is invested in recovery. As EPA's chief representative on the FEMA Undersecretaries **Recovery Support Function Leadership Group (RSFLG),** I meet bi-monthly with high level officials from federal agencies to identify issues, areas of focus, partnerships and funding streams across federal agencies.

Additional Background:

Funding in Proposed ***Supplemental Appropriations*** **(Still in process)** for EPA –

$50 million for debris and technical assistance to inspect and clean up hazardous waste facilities and to provide additional support for solid waste management activities.

$6.2 million for the Superfund program to help repair damage sustained to remedies at Superfund sites, including removal of damaged tanks and containers and repair of groundwater monitoring wells, aeration towers, and fencing.

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$7.0 million for the Leaking Underground Storage Tank program to repair damage to storage tanks to prevent spills and contaminants from leaking into the environment. Under the **Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds**, EPA provides grants to all 50 states plus Puerto Rico to capitalize state loan programs. The states contribute an additional 20 percent to match the federal grants. The programs also provide direct grants to the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Puerto Rico program functions like an infrastructure bank by providing low interest loans to eligible recipients for drinking water infrastructure projects. As money is paid back into the state's revolving loan fund, the state makes new loans to other recipients. These recycled repayments of loan principal and interest earnings allow the state's SRF programs to "revolve" over time.

The **Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act** (WIFIA) provides a federal credit program administered by EPA for eligible water and wastewater infrastructure projects.

EPA also administers grant programs, including the Brownfields grants program. This program provides modest amounts of grant funding for, among other purposes, work force development, development of local Brownfields programs; assessment of potential Brownfields sites; and cleanup of Brownfields sites.

42. FUNDING – RECOVERY

How much money do you anticipate you will need to complete long-term recovery tasks?

Short Answer:

Over the past seven months, EPA has spent about $65 million on our response efforts. Recovery is a longer road and that will involve resources coming from many areas of EPA and our partner agencies. Sources will include supplemental Congressional appropriations. EPA does not have an estimate on the EPA costs for recovery work at this time.

43. FUNDING -- RESPONSE:

How much money have you spent so far?

Short Answer:

As of March 14, the EPA has expended more than $65 million of Stafford Act funding.

44. ENFORCEMENT, FUEL WAIVERS, ORDERS, NO ACTION ASSURANCES AND FORCE MAJEURE CLAIMS -- RESPONSE:

What relief has EPA provided from regulations and rules to help Puerto Rico and USVI recover?

Short Answer:

As Puerto Rico continues to recover from the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, EPA continues to provide some flexibility in its enforcement, balancing protection of the environment with the extreme and unusual situation. EPA policy allows the Agency to issue no action assurances and grant force majeure relief from consent decree obligations in cases where it is necessary to avoid risks to public health and safety and where no other mechanism can adequately address the matter.

The EPA has issued a number of No Action Assurances and has granted some “Force Majeure” claims for relief from Consent Decree obligations. Some of these actions have expired and others are still in effect, depending on the need for the flexibility.